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A Memorial.

M. L. B.

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Mrs. Minerva Lee Hart,

WIFE OF DEACON NORMAN HART,

OF NEW BRITAIN, CONN.,

Died,

On Sabbath Evening, October 4th, 1885,

AGED 88 YEARS.

A Memorial.

PRINTED FOR FRIENDS.

"As one that mourneth for his mother."—*Psalm* 35 : 14.

HOGGSON & ROBINSON, PRINTERS.

To

Mrs. Ellen Hart Wells,

Whose devotion as a Daughter,

blessed our Mother

to the last.

Memorial.

WE can have but one mother. When she goes no one can take her place. No care is like the care of her who gave us birth and first folded us to her bosom. No hand is like the hand that held us in our helplessness and soothed us in the earliest expressions of our unrest. No voice is like the voice that hushed us with its gentle tone, and sung the sweetest music that we ever heard, and took us to God on the accents of prayer when we wondered who God is. We may find many friends; but there will be no friend such as she. Many may listen to our speech; but there will be no ear that will heed us like hers. The eyes that first looked on us, that through the growth of years, and the changes of fortune, watched us as steadily as the stars beam down from their high places, can have no rival. In our childhood there was one shelter to which we could always fly. Throughout our youth we knew that a strong persuasion was urged on the infinite compassion for us. In our manhood we stood firmer because a weak hand held on to

omnipotence for us. As age surrounded with a silver halo the head that had bowed over our cradle we saw on its radiant brow the signals of maturing saint-hood. Then, God's acre held a casket that was more to us than any earthly gem, and the serene heaven was brighter for the gem that God had taken to shed its luster around His throne.

All children of good mothers feel that there was no mother like their own. It is well so. Each one knows what his own mother was. As he thinks of her in the sober reflections of evening, life's evening, the illusions of its morning departed, like fogs that lay on the horizon of the early day and that have disappeared, she passes to a tender apotheosis in his thought.

I like to think of what my mother was. I like to go back over the years that had their deepest meaning to me in what she was. It was not merely from her, but through her, that I learned the earliest not only, but the greatest, lessons of my life. She made me acquainted with GOD. To her the voices of nature were His utterance, and she led me through nature up to nature's Author. In the presence, even in the turmoil, of those sublime forces which

environ us, I had no fear, because she had no fear. Her finger pointed to the stars, and in their silent courses was the lesson of His omnipotence. All providences were interpreted by her as issuing from a hand that could make no mistake.

Also she lived with Him, talked with Him, trusted Him, loved Him. At a certain hour every morning she went alone to her room, and we knew who it was she met there. She came out with the same tranquillity with which she entered, and we knew that she had not been disappointed in the meeting with Him to whom she committed her daily cares, as she did those interests which took hold of eternity.

Every week she took each one of her children apart that she might talk with them of the Father and that she might talk to Him for them. There was nothing formal, nothing cold or remote or unnatural, or that seemed aside of our life at home, about this. She led her children, as though they were still more God's children, to Him, and in a natural way and as though she meant it, asked from the Father that which she, as our mother, felt that we needed most. We never doubted that God was

there with us and that He heard with favor and response all that she said to Him. Sometimes there was gentle pleading, a little unusual urgency, only as though she wanted the blessing then, if it might be, but not as though there were any distrust.

So we learned that God was in our home, and that He was the same as He who guided the constellations. Evermore and everywhere we lived within His thought and love.

This mother was familiar with many books; but there was one Book that ranked them all. Young and Gray and Scott, Bunyan and Milton and Gibbon, and all the others, were read at times, and she could recite passages from them from memory. But this Book was read daily and it seemed as though she knew it all. She was a student of the Bible. She studied it with the best helps of that day. She appreciated the exegesis of scholars, entered with them into the subtler meanings of scripture and found a great joy in the things of God as they are revealed in His word.

She was one of the first to welcome and engage in the Sunday School work; not so much for the sake of her own family, as for the sake of those

families where the Bible was seldom opened and never studied. She was active in gathering in the children who needed instruction. Soon she was called to be the teacher of a Bible class. One of my earliest memories of her, as it seems, is as standing in the high gallery of the old First Church in New Britain, before a large company of young ladies and leading them in the study of the scripture lesson. She was absorbed in the truth and in communicating it to her class. She came to the duty with full and prayerful preparation and was intense in the service as representing those who were moved by the Holy Spirit to give us the holy oracles.

She did not teach in vain. In that class new lives were begun. To that class the Bible had new meaning. Its members became teachers, faithful mothers, useful hand-maidens of our Lord. In different and distant parts of our land women have sought me to tell what they owed to my mother as the teacher of that Bible class. It was a post of wide and lasting influence.

In the same spirit she was one of the earliest founders and most efficient supporters of the Mater-

nal Association. A company of intelligent and devoted mothers organized this Association and for many years attended its meetings at the home of my aunt, Mrs. Dr. Samuel Hart, in New Britain, to pray for the conversion of their children and of such of their husbands as were still unsaved. They relied upon prayer. They believed in united prayer. They believed also in the early conversion of children. They trusted in the covenant and in the promises which God had made to believing parents. They had given their children to God, to be His, to be trained for Him, some of them before their birth, all of them in the Sacrament of Baptism. They believed in the faithfulness of God and only doubted their own faithfulness. That this might be real and strong they prayed. They prayed not only with fervency and faith, but with continuance and persistence also. They knew that God's time and way were best, and they waited on God. The results were what might have been expected. All of their children, so far as I know, were brought to Christ, and some of them became largely useful in His Church. My mother was the Secretary of the Association, and one of her Annual Reports has

come into my hands. In it she says: "Although we cannot as at our last anniversary, speak of the hopeful conversion of many, still we would acknowledge with gratitude the smiles of Providence which have hitherto attended our feeble efforts; and we feel that, by thus uniting our energies, we have been led to supplicate with increased importunity the grace of God for our personal piety and excited to more systematic, believing efforts for the *early conversion* of our beloved children. * * Some of our beloved children at the commencement of the year, and some near its close, hoped they found the Saviour precious to their souls. O may they be of that number who shall endure to the end, and may they all at last be found clothed in the spotless robe of the Redeemer's righteousness!" This report was read June 6, 1838.

There was another mother, outside of this association, a lady of rare grace and intelligence, and of uncommon Christian experience, with whom this mother formed an alliance of prayer. They were of the same age, their families were of the same size, their husbands were men who had been often thrown together in public matters, men also of

severe uprightness, who commanded the respect of all other men, who were generous supporters of the Church and education, and of good morals, who were strong anti-slavery and temperance men, but were not avowed Christians. These two women, alike in their experience and in their views of truth entered into a close alliance which involved the offering of daily prayer for their households until they should receive the full blessing in the union of all those for whom this special petition, at a certain hour, was made, in the faith of Christ. No one knew of it but themselves and God. They waited on Him with full assurance that their request could not be denied. They had a special promise of Christ for this very case. Some years went by; but they knew that He to whom a thousand years are as one day, heard their daily cry, heeded it, kept it in constant remembrance, and would give them the answer in His own time. They did not wait beyond their patience. One by one every member of each of their families was converted; their husbands became office-bearers in the Church; their children were enrolled with Christ's followers and some of them became largely useful in His service.

My mother was a firm believer in prayer. She knew the power there is in it. She knew that by it human feebleness took hold of the resources of almightiness. She was regularly at the prayer-meetings of the Church. She made special effort to meet Christians in the neighborhoods where they lived to encourage them to fidelity for the families around them. Many a night have I, as a boy, accustomed to drive, taken her and another praying woman to some remote part of the parish where a few, perhaps fainting, persons were to plead together for the Spirit. Some nights were dark; I remember driving home when we could see the path only as occasionally flashes of vivid lightning would reveal it for a minute and then leave us in denser darkness. But she always had light and peace that passed all understanding.

There was one neighborhood, the hardest in the parish limits, which had a hard name and bore a bad reputation, for which my mother had a special interest. The roads that led to it and through it were rough and perilous for the carriage. The houses were browned in storm and sun, and some of them dilapidated with neglect and age. They

stood on the street or with a scant, untilled yard in front. Around them unkept animals had free range. Within, they were black with smoke and grime. Guns and fishing tackle hung on the walls. The floors were rough and dirty. The cooking was done in open fire-places. Some of the women were gentle in their manners, others were coarse. The men were rough and profane. They had known my mother from girlhood. They had known her father as a magistrate, and had sometimes renewed their acquaintance with him in conditions that boded the penalties of the law for them. This gentle woman came among them in the name of Christ, her Saviour and their Saviour, to speak of Him and for Him to them, who needed Him, who were great and strong in sin, yet who were loved by one who had died for their salvation. They had heard the old story; but they had forgotten it; they had become neglecters of worship, Sabbath-breakers, swearers, drunkards, some of them, men of strength to mingle strong drink. But they were awed when she entered their doors, with only God's word in her hand that its pure light might shine in their darkened homes and hearts; and they would

sit in silence while she read the word, and knelt with holy confidence on their bare, hard floors, and prayed for them; and they were respectful while also she would talk with them of their sinful lives, and of the mercy of the Saviour who loved them though they had degraded themselves and wronged Him. Sometimes it seemed as though those hard men were much moved; memories of better days were awakened; memories perhaps of pious mothers, of the house of God, of prayers they had heard. Resolutions may have been started which worked out changes and improvement, and a new order of things. At all events, that neighborhood, as it was, disappeared, and it would have been impossible for many years past to have found the semblance of it. Out of those gloomy houses, where sad-faced women worked, have come those who have professed Christ's name and have been welcomed to His Church. Every month, for years, my mother went on this mission, leaving tracts to be read after she had gone. I was her driver and escort on what was to me a dreary service; but whatever dread I had among those fierce men and dogs, she had no dread, but always went into their homes with a

quiet joy and an assurance as of welcome from some one. The Master, she knew, entered with her.

The intemperate habits of the men of this neighborhood were the most frightful thing there. A man, on any mission of rebuke and recovery, would have met fierce insult. I never knew my mother to receive anything but respect, or at the worst, silence, from them; and I was a mere lad, there, as they knew, only on her account. But she tried to persuade them, as she found opportunity, to abandon their cups. Long before there was a temperance society, she was a temperance woman, an advocate of total abstinence. This field gave her work in the line of her principles.

She gave the weight of her example and influence, to every step in the Temperance Reform, and was indefatigable to save men and their families from the woes of the drinking habit. She was always in advance of the reform, and welcomed each onward step in it. She was a great friend of legal Prohibition, and wanted strong and radical measures taken, to free our communities from the sale of all intoxicating drinks. From the first, she was opposed, personally, to any half way measures; at the

same time she believed in aiding the temperance cause in any, and every, measure that would reduce the evils of the rum power. All the advocates of the reform, received good cheer and God speed from her, and she believed that all measures, under providence, were leading to the complete overthrow of the hideous evil.

She was never afraid of woman's influence or woman's work or woman's forwardness in all the good and great reformations of the day. Herself the most retiring and gentle of women, she had the courage of her convictions, and would have led in any moral revolution, with the spirit of a confessor and the devotion of a martyr, had men been wanting for the work. But she liked the secret place of power and influence, and from her closet and her home she aided and cheered the public work of the reformers.

Her indignation was aroused against the baseness of social custom, which will permit vile men to go unscathed, and even to be courted, when their victims are ruthlessly consigned to a permanent ignominy. She despised the prudery, that cannot openly oppose an insidious sin, for fear that some-

body's shame may be touched, when at the same time the known sinners are féted, and their sins are even reckoned as their trophies. She believed in calling things by their true names, and giving men the reputations that truly designated them. She believed in social, as well as in personal, honesty.

She was an abolitionist before there was an anti-slavery society. Her whole nature revolted against the system which reduced human beings to a state of chattelism. She held that every man was a child of God, and that we stood as equals before the heavenly Father, in respect to our personal rights. When, therefore, she saw men and women and children put on the auction-block, when she saw women brought into a state where they were powerless before the exactions of cruel men, and children growing up in conditions of brutism and men worked without wage, she felt either that the land must be redeemed from this crime against man and God, or that terrible judgments would sweep over it. She, too, believed that every attribute of the Almighty was hostile to our system of slavery. She watched therefore with tireless interest each movement in the great Anti-Slavery reform:

believed, that when her husband and others were mobbed in New Britain for holding the opinions of free citizens, and daring to express them, that when greater mobs were overawing greater cities, and a price was put upon the heads of the great leaders, that when churches were riven by the strife, and politics were getting new transformations, and the whole land was stirred to a quickened conscience and to maddened hostilities, God was bringing one of His mighty human problems to solution. When the great war came, she rested the case on our human side : she waited, awed, yet in faith, for the final judgment of God.

That she was deeply interested in the work of the Church, of the local Church in which her own confession of Christ at an early age had been made, of the universal Church in its movement on the powers of darkness around all the world, no one who knew her could doubt. She loved and supported her own Church. She gave her affection and confidence to its ministers. And its ministers, through the more than three score years and ten of her membership in the First Church in New Britain, loved and honored her. They knew that

on her, and such as she, the joy and success of their work depended.

Missions to the heathen world drew her eager interest from their inception by our churches. The face and life of Harriet Newell were familiar to her and with many of her sisters she was deeply touched by the early consecration and sad death of this earliest of our missionaries, who was to reap the reward of her devotion, not only by her personal privilege to see the face of Him to whom she gave her pure life and who gave his infinite life for her, but also by that profound sympathy in the cause which was excited to a greater degree perhaps by the romance of her brief life, than it could have been by her prolonged service in the field. She kept herself informed of the progress of missionary labor among the peoples, and out of this information grew her concern for the missionaries, and for all their work.

Especially were her feelings enlisted for the work among the Freedmen in our southern states. Their freedom was that for which she had labored and prayed, and she was grateful that, by the wonderful providence of God, they had become by their de-

liverance the wards of the nation, the wards of the churches, and of all those indeed who, like herself, had wrought for this end.

She was therefore a warm supporter of the American Missionary Association. With patriotic fervor she favored all evangelical work in our own land, watched with concern the flow of the ceaseless tide of immigration into our New States and was jealous of the growing power of the Romish hierarchy among us.

As a careful student of the Scriptures she had her own theological opinions and when, years ago, the theological warfare waxed intense in our State and divided the Church in which she and her fathers for three generations had been members, she held to the New Haven Theology. She was an admirer of Dr. Taylor, and when he was to preach, in times of religious awakening, in neighboring towns, she made some effort to hear him, and it was her delight to entertain him in her own home when he came to New Britain.

The newer departures of these latter days had neither her intellectual approval nor her spiritual sympathy. The old faith gave her sufficient comfort and support.

Our mother, like all good mothers, lived in her children. Her children were Burdett Hart of New Haven, Norman Lee Hart of Philadelphia, who died January 6, 1876, and Mrs. Ellen Hart Wells of New Britain. Their joys and sorrows were her own. The events of their lives carried thrill and response into her life. Among her most carefully preserved papers, found since her death, were the letters of her children which told her of their coming to Christ. All their work for Him was that which gave her most satisfaction.

She was always sending them, with almost every letter, thoughts of others which interested her and would comfort or cheer them. To one who was in a peculiar trial she sent a piece, "God's Chiseling," and out of a wounded and sore heart came back the answer to her, as with a trust that no trial could wreck, "God knows how to Chisel!" The sorrow and death of this son, in the midst of a most useful and benevolent manhood, was her own severest trial. With motherly tenderness, in her last days, she gathered together her pictures of him, reread his letters, which she had pitifully kept, and his funeral sermon, by Lyman Whiting, D. D., and

lived over again in her thoughts his days of pain.

To her great grandson, on his first Christmas day, she gave a Bible, with her name and age written in it, that he, in coming years, might know what book she valued and loved most of all.

Her own earliest instruction, by her own mother, who was a gifted, as well as a devout, woman, had been in the Word of God. Her education was pursued in the school, in New Britain, and afterward in Berlin, of Miss Almira Hart, afterward the distinguished educator and author, Mrs. Lincoln Phelps: of whom she was a favorite pupil, and who married her favorite uncle, Simeon Lincoln, a strong man in his day, politically and otherwise: and with whom she occasionally corresponded until Mrs. Phelps was more than ninety, and Mrs. Hart was over eighty, years of age.

During the later years of her life she dwelt in the "Country of Beulah," of which it is said, that the air is very sweet and pleasant, that there continually is heard the singing of birds, and that every day the flowers appear in the earth, and that there the sun shineth night and day, and also that it is in sight of the city to which the Lord's people are

going, and that the Shining Ones walk there because it is upon the borders of Heaven.

She kept up her interest to the last in all that concerned the progress of the Kingdom at home and abroad. Her information as to current events and as to individual workers and as to the wants of the different fields of christian enterprise was wonderful for one who was more than four score years of age. Every week she studied the Sunday School lesson and was prepared upon it when the Sabbath morning came. Last winter she said to me: "I like the expositions of Dr. Pentecost better than I like any others."

Her death was peace. On the Monday of her last week she was in the grounds around her home, watching the flowers of the season and enjoying the soft autumn air. She was always a great lover of flowers and they rewarded her love by their growth and luxuriance and bloom. That night she was taken with a chill, and her physician, Dr. S. Waldo Hart, who was quickly summoned, pronounced it to be the beginning of the end. The silver cord was loosed and the golden bowl was broken. Gradually and without pain, for

a few days, she grew weaker and weaker. There was no rally. Nature was exhausted. Life's work was done. She was fully conscious and united with us in morning devotions. She said, "It is as I expected, I am not anxious to stay." She conversed with her physician with her usual vivacity. Three days before her death she said to me, "My sickness is not the weakness of disease, it is the infirmity of old age." The doctor said the fact could not have been better expressed. There was no disease. It was the close of life. On Sunday she lay as in sleep. In the afternoon she said, "I forget, I forget, I forget." All the things of this world, all the memories of a long life, all the faces and forms that had been loved, were fading away. It was still. Some hours passed. The tranquillity of the holy Sabbath evening came. The bells of the Churches had just finished to ring for the evening worship. The mother said, "I see, I see, I see." Her mental look was upward. The shining gate through which she was soon to pass was opened, and some of the glory shone through. Faces, it may be, of beloved ones, peered forth and hands of welcome were extended.

The blessed vision was dawning on her quickened sense and she had just time to call back to us in wonder and in joy. And then she slept.

Our mother had gone to her rest.

Dr. Burroughs, her pastor, said at her funeral that it was the only time he had ever officiated at the funeral of one who had been a member of the visible Church for more than three score years and ten. She became a christian at the age of thirteen years. She died in her eighty-eighth year. Through all those years she walked with Christ. She exemplified the real christian life on earth.

And now she is before the throne of God. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of water of life. And they shall see his face, and His name shall be on their foreheads, and they shall reign forever and ever."

In the last of the mother's scrap-books, which is full of choice selections from many sources, the very first piece is entitled

ONLY WAITING.

Only waiting till the shadows
Are a little longer grown;
Only waiting till the glimmer
Of the day's last beam is flown;
Till the night of earth is faded
From the heart once full of day;
Till the stars of Heaven are breaking
Through the twilight soft and gray.

* * * * * * *

Then from out the gathering darkness,
Holy, deathless stars shall rise,
By whose light my soul shall gladly
Tread its pathway to the skies.

And on the last page is the extract:

"Fear not the westering shadows,
O children of the day!
For brighter still and brighter
Shall be your heavenward way,
Resplendent as the morning,
With fuller glow and power,
And clearer than the noonday
Shall be your sunset hour."

And lower down, on that last page, of which we transcribe the last verse, is

COVENANT WITH GOD.

Lord, to Thee I give myself;
All I am and have I give;
All my days and all my powers,
To Thy glory now to live.
Thou, O God, in covenant art mine,
I am wholly and forever Thine.

FINIS.